

NOAA FISHERIES LIBRARY CONSORTIUM (NFLC): PROJECT OVERVIEW, PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

Sonja Kromann,

NFLC Coordinator

National Marine Mammal Laboratory Library

Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries

Seattle, Washington, USA

Kit Johnston

NFLC Webmaster

Southwest Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries

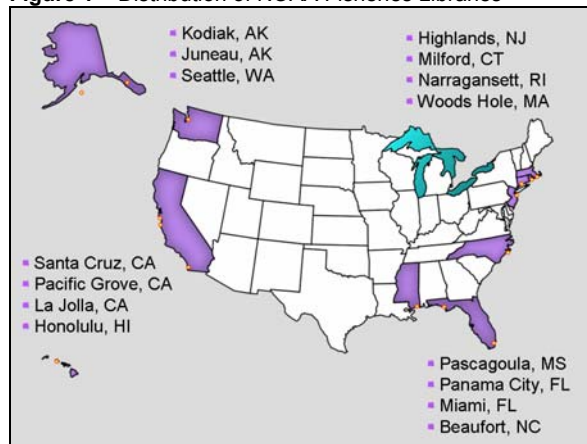
Santa Cruz, California, USA

Project Overview:

The libraries of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS, also known as NOAA Fisheries) comprise nearly half of the libraries serving the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). These libraries are distributed around the United States with 16 libraries in 11 states (Figure 1).

The NOAA Fisheries Library Consortium (NFLC) was formed in 2004 in order to fulfill a directive by the NOAA Fisheries Science Board to review existing library services and to make recommendations for improvement throughout the agency.

Figure 1 – Distribution of NOAA Fisheries Libraries



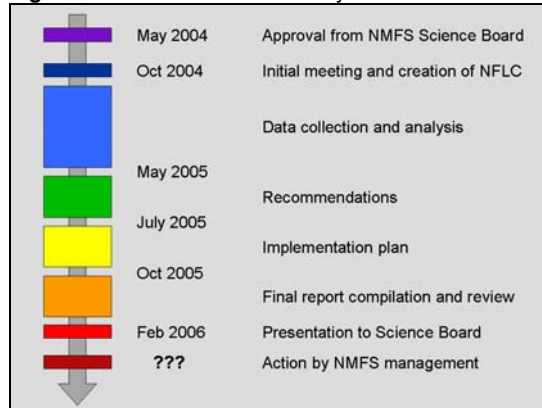
The NOAA Fisheries libraries began discussing the project in mid-2004. E-mail and conference calls were used to communicate and prepare for the initial meeting in October 2004. Agency support for the project included Science Board mentorship, travel support, and funding a professional facilitator.

The first meeting of the NFLC took place October 2004 at NOAA Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. A work plan was developed and committees were formed to complete a needs and capabilities assessment, develop recommendations, and plan for implementation. Committee reports were finalized and collected into the final project report which was presented to the Science Board in February 2006. The primary recommendations of the NFLC report were:

1. The NFLC be accepted as a standing advisory group on library issues for NOAA Fisheries.
2. Agency-wide electronic resources should be centrally funded.
3. A new full-time librarian be hired to negotiate and manage these resources.

These recommendations were accepted in principle by the NMFS Science Board. The NFLC continues to meet and work toward implementation of the report recommendations, while waiting for the funding necessary to fully put them into action. The timeline in Figure 2 illustrates the development of the NFLC and completion of various project elements.

Figure 2 – NOAA Fisheries Library Consortium timeline



Process:

Effective communication within the NOAA Fisheries Library Consortium was extremely important to the successful completion of the project. Working with a professional

facilitator in the initial phase focused the group's efforts helped develop the work plan and project timeline. E-mail and conference calls were convenient and cost-effective ways for the group to communicate after the initial meeting, and they continue to be used as the primary means of communication. NFLC progress was communicated to the Science Board through our mentor, and to other NOAA Libraries at annual meetings.

The NFLC web page (<http://swfsc.noaa.gov/nflc/>) provides information on the project and access to finalized NFLC documents. During the initial project, a separate document depository was maintained for group access to draft documents under review.

NFLC libraries were surveyed on key elements of library services for the needs and capabilities assessment. Data was collected on core print and electronic resources, cataloging, facilities, budget, staffing, equipment, and collection value. Data was compiled and analyzed in a Microsoft Access database. The results were reported in the NFLC needs and capabilities assessment, which served as the basis for our recommendations and implementation plan. Individual committee reports were reviewed by the entire group, then compiled into a final report including an executive summary.

Outcomes:

The formation of the NOAA Fisheries Library Consortium has strengthened cooperation and communication among NMFS Librarians. The needs assessment project highlighted existing strengths and enabled the group to formulate a plan for improving agency-wide library services. The final project report accepted by the NMFS Science Board in February 2006 provides a roadmap for the NFLC to move forward with the implementation of our recommendations.

Additional information on the NOAA Fisheries Library Consortium including the final project report is available on the NFLC website at: <http://swfsc.noaa.gov/nflc/>